

P 221719Z NOV 99  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6348  
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USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO  
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO  
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA  
AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA  
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR  
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE  
AMEMBASSY PANAMA  
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA  
AMEMBASSY MADRID

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 003882

USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/22/09  
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SUBJECT: CHAVEZ TO RUN AFTER ALL

CLASSIFIED BY JOHN F. MAISTO, AMBASSADOR. REASON 1.5 (D)

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: CHAVEZ HAS SAID HE WILL STAND FOR REELECTION. THE DECEMBER 15 REFERENDUM WILL ONLY CONTAIN ONE QUESTION: ON THE APPROVING OR NOT APPROVING THE NEW CONSTITUTION. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) REVERSING A POSITION HE HAD PUBLICLY REAFFIRMED EARLIER THE SAME DAY, PRESIDENT CHAVEZ ANNOUNCED NOVEMBER 19 THAT HE WOULD RUN IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS TO BE HELD SOME TIME THIS SPRING. DURING HIS CAMPAIGN, ANC PRESIDENT LUIS MIQUILENA WILL SERVE AS PRESIDENT. AS A RESULT OF CHAVEZ' DECISION, THE DECEMBER 15 REFERENDUM WILL CONTAIN ONLY ONE QUESTION FOR THE VOTERS: ON WHETHER OR NOT THE APPROVE THE CONSTITUTION. THERE WILL NOT RPT NOT BE -- AS PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED -- ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS ASKING THE VOTER WHETHER CHAVEZ SHOULD BE EXCUSED FROM RUNNING, OR WHETHER THE VOTER WANTS THE GOVERNOR OF HIS STATE TO RUN.

¶3. (C) NATIONAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL HEAD ANDRES CALECA TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THE FOLLOWING THAT HE HAD BEEN SEEKING FOR A WHOLE WEEK TO CONVINCE CHAVEZ TO AGREE TO RUN RATHER THAN SEEK CONFIRMATION VIA THE REFERENDUM, SINCE THE LEGALITY OF PUTTING ANY OTHER QUESTION THAN THAT OF APPROVAL OF THE CONSTITUTION IN THE REFERENDUM IS CERTAINLY QUESTIONABLE. IN ADDITION, CALECA NOTES THAT CONFIRMATION OF CHAVEZ IN OFFICE VIA THE REFERENDUM WOULD SMACK OF THE PLEBISCITE WITH WHICH DICTATOR MARCOS PEREZ JIMENEZ SOUGHT TO LEGITIMIZE HIS RULE IN THE 1950'S (AND OTHER VENEZUELAN DICTATORS BEFORE HIM.)

¶4. (C) ASKED WHY CHAVEZ HAD BEEN HESITANT TO RUN, CALECA SAID CHAVEZ CITED THE ADDITIONAL COST OF A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, AS WELL AS THE DISTRACTION OF HAVING TO CAMPAIGN AT A TIME WHEN THERE WAS MUCH SUBSTANTIVE WORK FOR HIM TO DO. CALECA ALSO NOTED THAT CHAVEZ MIGHT FEAR GETTING A LOWER SCORE THAN HE DID IN THE LAST ELECTION, DUE TO THE ONGOING DETERIORATION OF THE ECONOMIC SITUATION BETWEEN NOW AND NEXT SPRING WHEN THE ELECTIONS ARE HELD. (CALECA SAID HE THOUGHT IT MIGHT NOT BE POSSIBLE TO GET THEM ORGANIZED BEFORE APRIL.) FINALLY, WE HAVE ALSO HEARD THAT GOVERNORS OF CHAVEZ POLO PATRIOTICO COALITION HAD OBJECTED TO HAVING TO RUN IF HE DID NOT AND WAS NOT PROVIDING HIS COATTAILS.

